

1. Discussion of Sahara et al.

Sahara describes a technique for wafer-level packaging to reduce the resistance and propagation delay along the signal paths. Sahara's technique includes the formation of an external electrode immediately above an (internal) element electrode so that these electrodes do not need to be connected to one another by a long wire, thus reducing the resistance. (¶ 14). FIGS. 3 and 4 of Sahara illustrate steps in the formation of such a structure. To connect the electrodes to one another, an opening 14a is formed above element electrode 11. Thin metal layer 15 and thick metal layer 16 are formed such that they cover the opening 14a as regions 21, 22. Layer 16 is a thick metal layer made of Cu that can be formed by electroplating, resulting in regions 22-25. (¶ 65, FIGS. 4A-4D). As shown in FIG. 4B of Sahara, regions 22 of layer 16 are formed over opening 14a, such that region 22 conforms to the shape of the opening 14a and a depression is formed in the top of region 22. However, since region 22 is formed by the same Cu electroplating step as regions 23, 24, and 25, the actual thickness of each of these regions should be the same. Region 22 differs from regions 23, 24 and 25 in that it conforms to the shape of region 14a. However, Sahara makes no mention that region 22 has a different thickness from regions 23, 24 and 25. To the contrary, each of these regions should have the same thickness because they are all formed by the same Cu electroplating step.

2. The Claims Distinguish Over Sahara

By contrast, claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, contact pads, wherein a thickness of the pads, at least at a level of their portions not covered by the passivation layer, is smaller than the thickness of said conductive strips. Sahara does not teach or suggest contact pads that are smaller than the thickness of conductive strips formed in the same metallization level. Therefore, claim 1 patentably distinguishes over Sahara. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 2-7 depend from claim 1 and are therefore patentable for at least the same reasons.

**CONCLUSION**

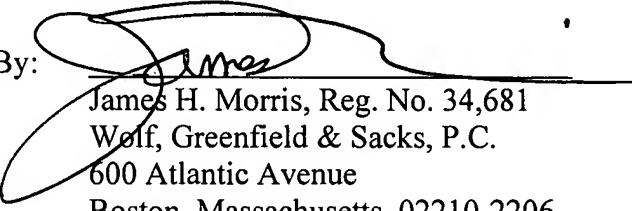
A Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested. The Examiner is requested to call the undersigned at the telephone number listed below if this communication does not place the case in condition for allowance.

If this response is not considered timely filed and if a request for an extension of time is otherwise absent, Applicant hereby requests any necessary extension of time. If there is a fee occasioned by this response, including an extension fee, that is not covered by an enclosed check, please charge any deficiency to Deposit Account No. 23/2825.

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Respectfully submitted,

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